

Message Text

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21

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1085

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PLAB, FR

SUBJECT: CGT-CFDT CALL PUBLIC MEETING

1. SUMMARY: STUNG BY GISCARD'S UNQUALIFIED REMINDER DURING HIS LAST TV CHAT THAT THE LABOR SCENE REMAINED CLAM BOTH IN THE FALL OF 74 AND SPRING 75 DESPITE DIRE PREDICTIONS (MOSTLY BY UNION LEADERS) TO THE CONTRARY, AND HARD-PRESSED TO SHOW THAT THEY ARE STILL THE SPOKESMEN OF THE WORKING CLASS, CGT-CFDT CAME UP WITH STILL ANOTHER IDEA FOR STIRRING THE CALM WATERS OF VACATIONING FRANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE IDEA WAS TO ORGANIZE A PUBLIC MEETING OF DELEGATIONS FROM SOME 120 BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS PRESENTLY ON STRIKE INVOLVING NO MORE THAN 80,000 WORKERS. THIS MEETING WAS CALLED FOR 10 JULY ON THE GROUNDS SURROUNDING THE EIFFEL TOWER FOR THE PURPOSE

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OF DRAWING PUBLIC ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT, DESPITE

AN ALLEGED CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE BY THE PRESS AND GOF, STRIKES STILL GO ON, WHICH SHOULD BE SEEN AS A SIGN OF GROWING DISCONTENT WITH GOF'S AUSTERITY PROGRAM.

3. ACCORDING TO THE ORGANIZERS SOME 70 STRIKING COMMITTEES HAVE ANNOUNCED THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE MEETING, WHICH WILL INVOLVE SETTING UP STANDS FROM WHICH THE STORY OF EACH STRIKE WILL BE TOLD AND RETOLD. ALTHOUGH THE PARISIAN WORKERS HAVE BEEN URGED TO COME TO THE EIFFEL TOWER TO SHOW THEIR SOLIDARITY, THERE ARE NO MARCHES PLANNED WHICH LEADS US TO THE VIEW THAT THE WHOLE AFFAIR WILL TAKE ON A FOLKLORIC CHARACTER WHICH PROBABLY WILL MAKE INTERESTING NEWS-PAPER COPY. IT WILL ALSO PROVIDE CGT-CFDT AN EVENT WITH WHICH TO CLOSE GRACEFULLY THE "SOCIAL YEAR" WHICH HAS BEEN ANYTHING BUT A BRILLIANT SUCCESS FOR THE UNIONS AND ESPECIALLY CGT-CFDT. THE 10 JULY MEETING WILL UNDOUBTEDLY OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY TO THE ORGANIZERS TO REPEAT PERENNIAL THREATS ABOUT MILITANT ACTION IN THE FALL WHICH IS OF COURSE TOO EARLY TO TAKE SERIOUSLY FOR ASSESSMENT PURPOSES.

4. THE OPPOSITION PARTIES DID NOT MISS THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROCLAIM THEIR SUPPORT OF THE 10 JULY ACTIVITIES AND THEIR READINESS TO PARTICIPATE. IN THE ABSENCE OF ELECTORAL CHALLENGES THE OPPOSITION, ESPECIALLY PC AND PS, LOOKS TO TRADE UNION MEETINGS AND DEMONSTRATIONS AS FORA FROM WHICH TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR SUPPORT OF THE DISCONTENTED AND TO ARTICULATE CRITICISM OF GOF AS WELL AS ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS AND APPROACHES TO FRANCE'S PROBLEMS.

5. PARTICIPATION IN TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO BOTH PC AND PS. FOR THE FIRST IT IS A WAY OF REASSERTING ITS CLAIM OF BEING THE ONLY TRUE WORKING CLASS PARTY. FOR THE SECOND IT IS A MEANS OF CHALLENGING PC'S CLAIMS. HENCE THE RENEWED AND MODERATELY SUCCESSFUL EFFORT PS IS MAKING TO RECRUIT MEMBERS AT THE SHOP LEVEL FOR HEADING UP PS SECTIONS TO COMPETE WITH PC CELLS.

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6. NORMALLY CGT-CFDT SHOULD NOT WELCOME THE PARTICIPATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THEIR MEETINGS AND DEMONSTRATIONS. DESPITE HEAVY IDEOLOGICAL QUOTIENT IN FRENCH TRADE UNION RHETORIC, THE RANK AND FILE DOES NOT FAVOR "POLITIZATION" OF ITS STRUGGLES FOR BREAD-AND-BUTTER ISSUES. IN OUR VIEW ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR CGT-CFDT FAILURES IN THE LAST SEVERAL

MONTHS HAS BEEN MEMBERSHIP AVERSION TO EXCESSIVE
POLITICAL COLORATION OF THEIR UNION ACTIVITIES. THE
CONCLUSION IS OBVIOUS. WHETHER CGT-CFDT LEADERS
WOULD ADMIT IT OR NOT, MOST OF THEIR ACTION PROGRAMS,
AND ESPECIALLY SINCE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, HAVE
BEEN POLITICALLY MOTIVATED, HENCE THE GREAT WELCOME
THEY HAVE BEEN EXTENDING TO PC-PS SUPPORT AND
PARTICIPATION IN THEM.
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